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TOWARD A POST WORLD WAR I MILITARY  
POLICY: PEYTON C. MARCH VS. JOHN  
MCAULEY PALMER

Ann Fisher

Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

5 February 1973

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MONOGRAPH

TOWARD A POST WORLD WAR I MILITARY POLICY:  
PEYTON C. MARCH vs. JOHN MCALLEY PALMER

By

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ANN FISHER  
WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS

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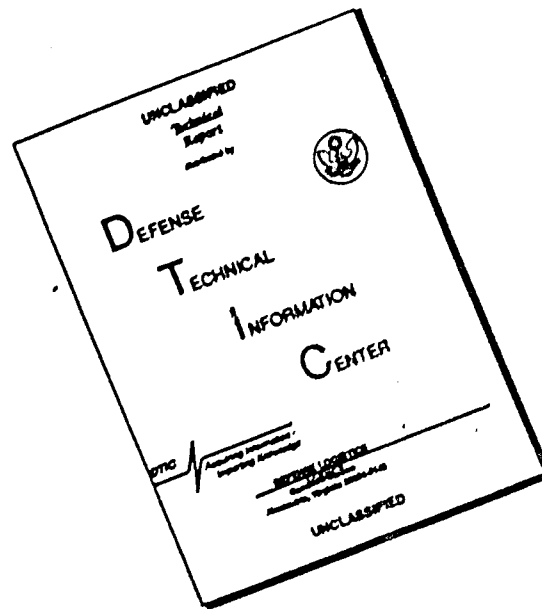
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USAWC RESEARCH PAPER

TOWARD A POST WORLD WAR I MILITARY POLICY:  
PEYTON C. MARCH vs. JOHN McAULEY PALMER

A MONOGRAPH

by

Lieutenant Colonel Ann Fisher  
Women's Army Corps

US Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania  
5 February 1973

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## ABSTRACT

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In October 1919, LTC John McAuley Palmer, Chief of the War Plans Branch, War Department, testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Military Affairs and discredited the plan for the future structure of the Army prepared by the Chief of Staff of the Army, Peyton C. March. Basically, the controversy between General March and Colonel Palmer rested on the size of the Regular Army in peacetime. This was not a new issue. There has been controversy over the size of the Army since Revolutionary War days. Therefore, a survey of literature on general military policy was made to better understand the proposals for a postwar army sent to Congress in 1919. In addition, the writings of General March and Colonel Palmer and their interpreters were examined to understand how these officers arrived at opposing positions. The Senate Hearings on Reorganization of the Army after World War I are examined in some detail to determine congressional reaction to various proposals for the future structure of the Army. The policy that was finally passed as the National Defense Act of 1920 placed its main reliance for mobilization on the National Guard and Reserves. This was a victory for Colonel Palmer who advocated a small standing army in peacetime. But, it was a hollow victory. After 1920, Congress progressively reduced the authorized strength of the Army causing the closing of National Guard and Reserve training sites and the Regular Army sank back towards its unready condition of years past. In addition, Colonel Palmer won his victory at the cost of disloyalty to the Chief of Staff.

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## INTRODUCTION

On Thursday, 9 October 1919, Lieutenant Colonel John McAuley Palmer, Chief of the War Plans Branch, War Department, appeared before the United States Senate Subcommittee on Military Affairs to testify concerning the War Department's plan for its postwar role. In his testimony, he destroyed the plan prepared personally by the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, Major General Peyton C. March. What forces led this staff officer to criticize in public the decisions made by his superior officer for the future structure of the Army?

Much has been written about the controversy that has existed from Revolutionary War days to the present concerning the development of a viable military policy that will insure preparedness. To understand the issues as they affect the March-Palmer controversy over the size of the standing army in peacetime, the early history of organizing the Army must be addressed. To do this, a report of a survey of literature available at the United States Army War College Library and the United States Army Military History Research Collection in the field of general military policy will set the stage for the proposals for a postwar army sent to Congress by the War Department in the summer of 1919. In addition, the writings of General March and Colonel Palmer and their interpreters are surveyed in an attempt to understand how these professional officers arrived at opposing positions.

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Proposals for the structure of a post World War I army contained in the record of the Senate Hearings on Reorganization of the Army are also examined in some detail to determine the impact they had on members of Congress and what post World War I policy finally evolved.

Underlying this survey of military policy is the dilemma faced by Colonel Palmer who disagreed with the policy of his Chief, stated his reasons for disagreement, was overruled, and then was called upon to testify before a congressional committee on the policy with which he disagreed.

GEORGE WASHINGTON AND JOHN C. CALHOUN:  
MILITIA vs. EXPANSIBLE REGULAR ARMY

From the beginning of American military history there has been controversy over what sort of Army the country should have. One view was that the American Army should be a professional force modeled on the armies of Europe. Another advocated a nonprofessional, citizen army. The proponents of a professional force argued that a citizen army would have the advantage of vast numbers, but that this would be offset by the superior skill of the professionals. In response to this argument, advocates of a citizen army insisted that citizen soldiers offered the only military system that is safe for democracy.

Although George Washington often criticized the deficiencies of the militia, he concluded that a well-organized and disciplined militia is "the fairest and best method to preserve, for a long time to come, the happiness, dignity and independence of our country. . . ."1



A proponent of the opposing view was John C. Calhoun who while Secretary of War during the War of 1812 strongly urged that the Nation's principal reliance be upon a professional standing army. He favored an expansible standing army where the only difference between the peace and war formations would be "in the increased magnitude of the latter . . . giving to it the augmentation which will then be necessary."<sup>2</sup>

#### EMORY UPTON: EXPANSIBLE ARMY PLAN

The opposing views of Washington and Calhoun were carried over to succeeding generations. One of the strongest proponents of a professional army was Brevet Major General Emory Upton. His views concerning an expansible Regular Army had a far-reaching effect on the Army as a whole and an immediate influence upon the officers of the regular establishment after the Civil War.

After this war the Army had been reduced to a strength of 50,000 by a people tired of heavy taxation. Later, in 1870, the authorized strength of the Army was further reduced to less than 30,000 officers and men scattered throughout 203 military posts.<sup>3</sup> The Army had returned to isolation and became an Indian-fighting Army remote from the civilian population in both distance and philosophy. Samuel P. Huntington in his book The Soldier and the State contends that it was during this period of isolation and rejection by the civilian populace that the officer corps created a professional spirit which evolved into a generation of reformers

who began to determine the nature of the military professional. Huntington believes that the creative core of the reform movement was a distinctly military group in three ways:

They were largely cut off from contemporary American civilian influence. They derived their ideas and inspiration from the military institutions, and they transcended service boundaries, submitting ideas and encouragement back and forth between the two services and developing professional institutions applicable to both Army and Navy.<sup>4</sup>

Undoubtedly, Emory Upton's ideas on a professional army were very much a part of this dialogue.

The professional spirit of the times was recognized also by the British soldier-historian John W. Hacket who noted:

The years between 1860 and World War I saw the emergence of a distinctive American professional military ethic, with the American officer regarding himself as a member no longer of a fighting profession only, to which anybody might belong, but as a member of a learned profession whose students are students for life.<sup>5</sup>

It was in this environment that Emory Upton's contempt for a citizen militia gained many disciples among officers struggling for identity and a sense of self-worth and pride in profession. In response to the Uptonians, advocates of the citizen soldiery became even more suspicious of military professionals than they had been in the past. However, some spokesmen for the citizen soldier appeared within the military. One of the more prominent was Major General Leonard Wood, who, while serving as Chief of Staff of the Army in 1910, made efforts to reconcile differences and "convince

Americans that the circumstances of the twentieth century and their country's new great power required universal military training and conscription."<sup>6</sup>

Since Upton's and Wood's views played such a prominent role in the thinking of military planners after World War I, it is necessary to discuss briefly these two officers and their philosophies.

Emory Upton graduated from the Military Academy in 1861 and was in the Civil War a month later. He distinguished himself in action and was made a brevet major general before he was 26. Subsequently, he traveled abroad as an observer for the Army and became enchanted with the German military system. Upton's enthusiasm is best expressed in the following quote:

I shall devote most of my attention to the subject of officers and to showing our reckless extravagance in making war. When Germany fought France she put her army on a war-footing in eight days, and in eight days more she had four hundred thousand men on French territory. It took us from April 1861, to March 1862 to form an army of the same size at an expense of nearly eight hundred millions of dollars. We cannot maintain a great Army in peace, but we can provide a scheme for officering a large force in time of war, and such a scheme is deserving of study.<sup>7</sup>

Essentially, Upton believed the Regular Army need not number more than 25,000 men with the battalion serving as the basic organizational unit. Regiments would contain two battalions but be staffed with officers for three or four battalions. In an emergency the Reserves, or as Upton called them, the National

Volunteers, would be mobilized to fill the skeleton battalions. Companies would also be organized on the expansible principle and in peacetime would include three officers and 54 men. In an emergency they would be expanded to five officers and 242 men with the extra officers coming from the noncommissioned officer ranks, from students taking military training at land grant colleges, and from officers of the militia who could pass a special examination.<sup>8</sup>

Upton believed his proposed strength of 25,000 would overcome opposition to spending money on an army in peacetime. With costs in mind, he proposed also an alternate but less desirable plan, that future wars could be fought with volunteer infantry, leaving the artillery and cavalry in the hands of the regulars.<sup>9</sup> Both proposals revolved around one key proposition--"that the armed forces of the nation should be led and controlled by the Regular Army. . . ."<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, Upton proposed plans for reform of the Army's current staff system which was composed of various bureaus and departments that planned and operated independently of each other in favor of a general staff patterned after the system used by the Prussian Army. He proposed also a broad program of military education, the rotation of officers between line and staff to keep staff officers sensitive to the needs of the troops and promotion by merit as opposed to promotion by seniority.<sup>11</sup>

Generally, military historians agree that Upton's plan for military preparedness failed: (1) to address what would happen if

both sides in a conflict were prepared instead of assuming that preparedness always led to a quick, decisive victory; (2) to articulate a threat to justify the expense of reforming and training the Army (he finally fell back on the menace of labor radicals that the militia had been unable to control in the late 1870's<sup>12</sup>); (3) to understand the deep-rooted belief in the minuteman and the American tradition of distrust of the military; and (4) to recognize the inadequacy of a volunteer system to accomplish mobilization in time of emergency.

Upton's comments praising a highly prepared regular force contained in his book The Armies of Asia and Europe<sup>13</sup> were received enthusiastically by military men and a few civilians who were concerned with the Nation's readiness. Reform measures were attempted. In 1878, James A. Garfield, the Republican representative from Ohio, helped set up a joint committee to study and report on the establishment of a sound military policy. This committee, chaired by Senator Ambrose E. Burnside--one time commander of the Army of the Potomac--prepared a bill with major proposals for the development of a general staff and the creation of regiments of four battalions each with only three battalions kept up to strength. The fourth would be filled by national volunteers.<sup>14</sup> Upton was jubilant since it followed so closely his proposals for an expansible army. However, the bill was defeated by a Congress which believed in the minuteman tradition, believed that specialists were not needed to conduct war, and believed that costs should be kept down in peacetime.

Upton persevered and began to detail his views in his book The Military Policy of the United States.<sup>15</sup> He did not live to finish it. He began to have severe headaches and fits of depression over the lack of recognition he felt was due him. On 15 March 1891, at the age of 41, he shot himself. His ideas were not circulated widely until after the Spanish-American War when in 1904 Elihu Root<sup>16</sup> saw to the editing and publication of his book and used it as a basis for a major reorganization of the Army.<sup>17</sup>

#### LEONARD WOOD: UNIVERSAL MILITARY TRAINING

Major General Leonard Wood had an unusual beginning. He was an Army surgeon, graduate of the Harvard Medical School, who had become the first colonel of the Rough Riders. He rose to be military governor of Cuba and later commanding general in the Philippines. In July 1910 he became Chief of Staff of the United States Army. The Army he took over as Chief had come a long way since Upton's time. It had increased to a strength of about 4,500 officers and 77,000 men.<sup>18</sup> It had been reequipped. Officers had gained wartime experience in Cuba or the Philippines, many had received advanced training in schools set up during the Root reorganization. The general staff organized by Root was weak but operational, and there were even some war plans!

But essentially it was still the old Army; a small isolated, inbred and professional service. Its core of career officers and long-service NCO's and enlisted men was filled out by what riffraff the recruiting offices could entice out of the then somewhat depressed civilian economy.<sup>19</sup>

The Army was still widely scattered in small posts kept open by politicians. The reserve system based upon the National Guard was virtually nonexistent. Elihu Root had produced a system reasonably prepared to fight another Spanish-American War but not capable of fighting a war of the magnitude of the Russo-Japanese War which General Wood used as an example to protest unpreparedness.<sup>20</sup> Walter Millis in his book Arms and Men states, "Wood saw, with an admirable shrewdness, that the key to his problem lay not in military planning but in public opinion."<sup>21</sup> He became a "military Evangelist" and promoted the gospel of the universal obligation to military service.<sup>22</sup>

General Wood began campaigning for an enlarged citizen reserve. To establish this reserve, Wood recommended a universal military obligation for men between the ages of 18 and 25. Believing that each year 500,000 men would be available for training, he felt that the Nation would always possess a ready reserve force of about 3,500,000 men. He proposed that these men receive elementary military training in secondary school followed by full-time training for about 3 months and brief annual training thereafter until they reached 25 or 27.<sup>23</sup> Wood also envisioned that a portion of the men in the ready reserve, chosen by lot or by volunteering, would be organized into 25 reserve divisions, equipped and ready for immediate call.<sup>24</sup>

Wood used as his theme the concept that universal military service was a democratic principle within the American military tradition and that the Nation could benefit from this service in

other ways than preparedness for war. He mentioned flood control and the example of the suppression of yellow fever in Cuba.

Like so many . . . products of the nineteenth century rural American background Leonard Wood believed deeply in the power of moral forces. Universal military training was to him an assurance of readiness for war, because he was confident of the prowess of American citizen armies, especially when they were animated by such a moral principle as universal military service represented.<sup>25</sup>

JOHN MCAULEY PALMER: REGULAR ARMY  
AS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

While General Wood was campaigning for an improved citizen reserve, John McAuley Palmer's voice was first heard advocating a military policy for the United States Army.

Palmer was born in Carlinville, Illinois on 23 April 1870. He was graduated from the Military Academy in 1892 and was commissioned in the Infantry. After service in Cuba during the Spanish-American War in 1899 and a tour in China during the Boxer Rebellion the next year, he returned to West Point as a chemistry instructor. He became known as an able thinker and planner and was sent to the staff college at Fort Leavenworth.<sup>26</sup> In 1910 he was assigned to staff work in Washington. He was a captain serving on the General Staff<sup>27</sup> when he raised questions over the Uptonian doctrine of an expansible Regular Army that he had been taught at the Military Academy.<sup>28</sup>

Captain Palmer was part of a committee organized by General Wood to help prepare Secretary of War Henry Stimson's annual report for 1912 called "The Organization of the Land Forces of the United



States." While serving on this committee, he advocated dropping the expansible army concept as impractical. He got Secretary Stimson's ear and was able to convince the Secretary that he should propose a Regular Army not skeletonized but ready to fight immediately:

A regular army organized in divisions and cavalry brigades and ready for immediate use as an expeditionary force or for other purposes for which the citizen soldiery is not available, or for employment in the first stages of war while the citizen soldiery is mobilizing and concentrating.<sup>29</sup>

Professor Weigley explains in his History of the United States Army that the War Department report could not make a permanent policy commitment and for that reason its rejection of the Uptonian expansible army plan did not cause as much furor as it might have in a policy document.<sup>30</sup>

In America in Arms, Palmer explains how he arrived at the proposal contained in the "Land Forces" report.<sup>31</sup> His grandfather had been a successful citizen soldier during the Civil War. As a major general, he had commanded the XIV Corps in the Army of the Cumberland. After the war, he returned to politics and was a member of the Military Affairs Committee of the United States Senate while his grandson was still a second lieutenant believing in the Uptonian idea of an expansible Regular Army. His grandfather questioned this Uptonian view and young Palmer spent a great deal of time trying to defend it. He related that his grandfather assured him "that American people will never accept that expansible army scheme of yours. If that is your first best solution, you had better forget it and work up a second best that will have some chance of getting

through Congress."<sup>32</sup> After this, Palmer decided to convince his grandfather by working out the expansible army scheme in detail:

The results were discouraging. When I assumed a peacetime nucleus big enough to make a real foundation for effective expansion for a great war, I found that the American people would be saddled with a big standing army in time of peace. When I assumed a peacetime nucleus small enough to give any chance of acceptance by Congress it would result in too small a war army--unless I also assumed a rate of expansion that would be obviously absurd. And how to get the men for full expansion in a great war? The volunteer system would certainly fail on so vast a scale, and to propose conscription for the expansion of a big standing army would be asking the American people to adopt a militaristic system.<sup>33</sup>

The "Land Forces" report was rejected by Congress, but Palmer would be heard from again.

#### LINDLEY M. GARRISON: BANKRUPTCY OF VOLUNTEER SYSTEM

Leonard Wood was replaced as Chief of Staff by Major General W. W. Wotherspoon who held office for 9 months and was superseded in turn by Brigadier General Hugh L. Scott in December 1914. In 1915, President Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of War, Lindley M. Garrison, tasked the General Staff for recommendations to ready the Army for possible war in Europe. The General Staff suggested nothing beyond bringing the Regular Army to authorized strength. Secretary Garrison had been influenced to some extent by Leonard Wood and prodded for something better. General Scott's staff produced a plan to increase the Regular Army to 281,000 men raised

by veteran reserves to 500,000, plus a "continental" army of a half million volunteers.<sup>34</sup>

Instead, Secretary Garrison, striving for the obtainable, submitted to Congress a plan to increase the Regular Army to 141,843 men and proposed that a citizen or "continental" army of 400,000, raised in contingents of 133,000 men per year, be created. Men in the citizen army, actually a nationalized militia, would be enlisted for 3 years with the colors and 3 years in the reserve. Under the enlistment contract, each man would be liable for a fixed period (2 months was proposed) of intensive field training during each of his 3 years with the colors. The National Guard was to continue in its present status but with increased federal support and encouragement.<sup>35</sup>

Opponents of the plan argued that Secretary Garrison's proposal would weaken the Regular Army and relegate the National Guard to a minor role behind the Regular Army and the citizen "continental" army. Secretary Garrison rebutted that the Regular Army could not recruit more than 50,000 men a year as there were insufficient accommodations for more than that, and that anything else, including universal military training, would cost too much in terms of dollars and manpower. He further argued that if 133,000 men a year could not be procured for the citizen army then "the bankruptcy of the volunteer system would be proved."<sup>36</sup>

When after bitter fighting, the National Defense Act of 1916 was finally passed on 3 June, it provided for four classes of troops

in the United States Army: The Regular Army, the National Guard, the reserve force, and the volunteer army which would be raised only in time of war. An officer and enlisted reserve corps was created by the Act which also provided for ROTC units at colleges and universities throughout the country. In addition, the Act created a federalized National Guard subject, with the consent of Congress, to the call of the President. Able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 45 would enlist for 6 years, 3 of which would be spent in active service and the rest in the Guard. Thus, there was only a small increase in the Regular Army and in time of war the nation would be dependent upon the National Guard for a trained reserve.<sup>37</sup> With the National Defense Act of 1916, the tradition of the military amateur seemed to have won over the military professional.

When war came in 1916 and the National Guard failed to recruit to full strength, Secretary Garrison felt he was vindicated in his belief of the inadequacy of reliance on volunteers to raise an army in time of war. A conscription bill was prepared and passed on 13 May as the Selective Service Act of 1917.

The experiences of World War I reopened the subject of the size and function of the Regular Army, the role of the National Guard, and universal military training. In 1919 a conflict began which was centered around the issue of the citizen in arms and which raised questions of degree and method of professional control, the type of military training, and the organization of the Army. As had been the case in the past, for some the conflict centered on a

Regular Army organized to expand rapidly in time of war versus a professional army acting as a training cadre for citizens who would comprise the bulk of the mobilization forces. To this basic conflict was added the problems of organizing to accommodate new weapons--the airplane and gas--and the lobbying of bureau chiefs who were chafing under the tight control of the Chief of Staff.

PEYTON C. MARCH: EXPANSIBLE ARMY  
PLAN FOR POST WORLD WAR I

General Peyton C. March became Chief of Staff of the Army on 4 March 1918. He was a Military Academy graduate--graduating in 1888--after first earning a degree in classics from Lafayette College. His father was a professor at Lafayette and March grew up in a stimulating world of books and brilliant conversation. He had apparently harbored a desire for a military career since childhood. He welcomed the opportunity to attend the Military Academy when an appointment was offered to Professor March for one of his sons.<sup>38</sup> He was graduated into a small army of about 27,000 and for 10 years endured the monotony of garrison duty. The war with Spain changed his career and he distinguished himself in the Spanish-American War and in the Philippines Insurrection. He took professionalism seriously and was praised for this quality by General Arthur MacArthur who selected him as his aide. March's selection as Chief of Staff was based on his ability as an organizer and administrator demonstrated while he was assigned as a General Staff officer (he was one of the first officers assigned in 1903) and with the Adjutant

General's Department. March was a proud man who "would not hesitate to offend the most powerful man on Capital Hill on a trifle if he thought a principle was involved."<sup>39</sup>

After taking office as Chief of Staff, General March did a superb job of stepping up the flow of manpower and supplies to France. He reorganized the General Staff to gain efficiency and by November 1918 made it into a powerful organization that functioned as the brains of the Army.<sup>40</sup> The General Staff gained this power against bitter opposition from bureau chiefs who resented any usurpation of their authority. As a result, March made enemies among members of Congress who were friendly to the bureau chiefs and who resented his refusal to grant their requests for special consideration for constituents.

After the armistice of 11 November 1918, General March immediately began to plan for a reorganization of the permanent military establishment in order to take advantage of lessons learned in World War I.<sup>41</sup> It was not going to be easy. President Wilson was indifferent to military matters and the nation wanted to forget war and avoid any foreign entanglements. General March was directed to demobilize as quickly as possible and by 1 January 1920 the Army was reduced to a strength of about 130,000. A hostile Republican Congress began a critical investigation of the conduct of the war which ceased only when a Republican president took office in March of 1921.<sup>42</sup>

Congress began also to consider a future military policy for the United States Army. Republican Senator (New York) James W. Wadsworth, Jr., Chairman of the Senate Military Affairs Committee, a proponent of reasonable military preparedness, related in 1927 the reasons why his committee took up the task of developing a postwar policy. His remarks vividly describe the thinking of the time:

It will be remembered that, in the months immediately following the Great War, a demand for the adopting of a definite military policy arose throughout the country, much of it emanating from the returning soldiers. The part played by the United States in the final stages of the war was brilliant and decisive, but the confusion and delays at the outset of our undertaking, and the frightful expenditure of money, to say nothing of the lives sacrificed to no military purpose, had made a deep and lasting impression upon the Congress and the people. We had no military policy worthy of the name prior to the war. We paid a heavy price for our neglect. The public demanded that the Congress study the lessons contained in that vivid chapter and translate the result into a stature that would insure the country against a repetition of the bitter experience of 1917 and the early part of 1918.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, public reaction against the military and an overwhelming urge for government economy would make it extremely difficult to reach a postwar policy for a permanent military establishment.

A committee of four officers in the War Plans Branch of the War Plans Division received from General March the following broad guidance for the development of a postwar army:

The War Plans Branch is directed to submit plans for the organization of the Regular Army as it is to be after the War.

It has been suggested by the Chief of Staff and Director of Operations that 1 Field Army reduced in strength to 500,000 be taken as a basis on which to proceed.

Work is to be expedited.<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, Senator Wadsworth together with Military Affairs Committee members, Oregon Democrat George E. Chamberlain and Indiana Republican Harry S. New, began talking about providing for postwar universal military training. Public sentiment seemed favorable and the Rotarians and the American Medal Association endorsed this training as beneficial to the growth of the Nation. General March was not opposed to a system of universal military training and further directed the War Plans Branch to consider universal training as part of the proposed War Department bill.<sup>45</sup>

General March became impatient over the length of time it was taking his staff to complete the reorganization plan. He had already received the approval of Secretary of War Newton D. Baker to propose a strength of 500,000 as the foundation for the proposed reorganization. In addition, Secretary Baker had concurred with his scheme for a system of military training for all eligible men during their 19th year. These men would receive training for 3 months and then return to civilian life subject to call, in the event of war only, for a period of 2 years. General March wanted to establish a short training period that would minimize the absence of young men from their daily occupations. Secretary Baker also agreed with the assumption General March was using in his planning that, upon a declaration of war by Congress, the Selective Service Act of 1917 would come automatically into effect.



When General March did receive the reorganization plan from his staff, he rejected it as going beyond the guidance given by producing a personnel plan based on an 11 months training program and extended service in the organized reserve. He found it neither "American or desirable."<sup>46</sup>

General March then prepared a plan of his own which was Uptonian in its concept. This plan as presented to Congress called for a permanent Regular Army of 500,000 men organized as an expansible army so it would serve as the half-strength skeleton of a field army of five corps with 20 combat divisions. General March based his calculations upon the old assumption of an invasion arriving upon the coasts of the Western Hemisphere--an assumption to which our own invasion of Europe lent some credence.<sup>47</sup> Graduates of universal military training would fill out the Regular Army cadres in time of war. The National Guard was barely mentioned in his plan since March believed it would operate under the provisions of the National Defense Act of 1916. It is important to note that he made enemies within the National Guard when he stated that no Guard unit should be less than 100 men. If acted upon, this would have eliminated many small units and the many officer positions associated with these units.

Other features of the bill were proposals to reorganize the War Department by strengthening the General Staff in its control of the entire military establishment and to formalize new branches such as the Air Service that had been organized during the war. Rather

overconfidently, General March felt it to be a golden moment in which to fashion a sound and continuing military policy of universal conscription.<sup>48</sup> The country had a populace who had accepted the draft in 1917 without a murmur, and he believed it would recognize the need for a strong peacetime army.

General March's insistence on getting a plan prepared as quickly as possible made it difficult for the planners to obtain the views of the American Expeditionary Force in France. Relations between General March and the AEF Commander-in-Chief General John J. Pershing were strained, primarily over what General Pershing considered General March's high-handedness and failure to subordinate himself to the AEF commander.<sup>49</sup> General March did ask General Pershing for 15 of his staff officers for the planning staff. Pershing responded by sending six, one of whom was Lieutenant Colonel John McAuley Palmer.<sup>50</sup>

On 3 August 1919, Secretary of War Baker sent the War Department's reorganization bill to Congress with a letter to Senator Wadsworth which stated in part:

This is the latest form assumed by our studies on this subject in the War Department. We are still, however, unadvised by the intimate consultation of the experience and judgment of General Pershing and his associates abroad which would be necessary before a final draft could be said to represent the full opinion of the Army. I would not myself give official approval to a draft which did not contain the results of such a consultation. It is the purpose of your committee, however, to use this draft only as the basis of hearings at which Army officers will be in attendance, both those who have been familiar with the

problems on this side and those who have had experience in the Expeditionary Forces.<sup>51</sup>

It appears that the Secretary of War was aware of the esteem the Nation and members of Congress held for General Pershing the "war hero" and the dislike some members of Congress held for General March, the "desk soldier" whose rigidity and refusal to grant special favors had antagonized so many. When General March was asked if he had conferred with Secretary Baker about the reorganization bill (which he had), he replied bluntly: "Yes. He [Secretary Baker] forwards this bill."<sup>52</sup>

The Senate Military Affairs Committee hearings that commenced on 7 August 1919 to hear the War Department Bill also considered two other bills--a universal training proposition introduced by Senator Chamberlain and another introduced by Senator New to create a separate department of aeronautics.<sup>53</sup>

General March was the first witness and between 7 August and 17 December 1919 the Committee heard numerous witnesses to include Secretary Baker, former Secretary of War Henry Stimson, AEF Commander General Pershing, Major General Leonard Wood (now commanding the Central Department with headquarters in Chicago), corps and division commanders, National Guard officers and advocates, bureau chiefs and officers serving on the Army General Staff.<sup>54</sup> The House opened hearings on reorganization 4 weeks later and most of the witnesses who appeared before the Senate Committee also appeared before the House Committee. These witnesses discussed many subjects affecting the future of the Army but the major topics were the size of the

Army, universal military training, General Staff power, and the new branches, particularly the Air Service.<sup>55</sup>

General March started his testimony by outlining the salient features of the War Department Bill and acquainting the Committee members with the current organizational structure of the General Staff and Bureaus (Appendix 1 portrays this organization). Questioning soon centered on the necessity for a half-million man army in peacetime. Senator Joseph S. Faelinghaysen (Republican from New Jersey) set the stage for what was to follow when he remarked that with about four million trained men available in the country to meet an emergency the country would have a 500,000 man army with distrust and that "we want, at this time, to do what is practical, to avoid what occurred in the past few years--the cost, the tremendous sacrifice, the tremendous burden of taxation--and arrive at some simple plan of national defense which will be effective should an emergency arise."<sup>56</sup>

Although cautioned by his advisors to be a diplomat as well as a soldier, it is evident from his testimony that General March did not regard politicians too kindly. He was disenchanted from testifying before the committee investigating war expenditures and stated later:

I was asked about everything, from why General Scott was given a Distinguished Service Medal to the movement of Czechoslovak troops in Siberia. I was even asked about the qualifications of my predecessors for the office of Chief of Staff. These questions, of course, were perfectly outrageous. . . .<sup>57</sup>

Throughout his testimony, General March remained adamant that a large army was needed to insure military preparedness. When asked if his stand had any bearing on the future of the League of Nations (President Wilson was using as an argument for the League the necessity for a large standing army if the League was not established), General March denied this and stated his reorganization plan was not based on political considerations.<sup>58</sup> His testimony favoring a large standing army leads to the conclusion that General March was crusading for an organizational structure controlled by the Regular Army that would be responsive immediately in time of war. His experiences with delays in getting manpower and materiel to France because of the lack of trained and seasoned staff officers and commanders makes this desire understandable. March was ready to accept a smaller force, but asked for the larger number to absorb congressional cuts. His rationale is included in his book The Nation at War:

At no time in the consideration of the reorganization did the War Department imagine that Congress would appropriate the money for 500,000 men. . . . But what we hoped was that Congress would give the proper organization and the proper overhead which never can be improvised successfully in time of war.<sup>59</sup>

JOHN MCAULEY PALMER: "ARMY OF PEOPLE"  
PLAN FOR POST WW I

As mentioned earlier, when General March requested the AEF commander to send officers to represent him in planning the post-war Army, General Pershing sent his protege Lieutenant Colonel

John McAuley Palmer. Palmer had been serving on the Army General Staff when Pershing picked him to go to France with him as his Operations Officer. Palmer later commanded a brigade until he was sent to Washington. General Pershing was aware of Palmer's views on military policy but he sent him to Washington without instructions.<sup>60</sup>

Palmer relates in his book America in Arms that when he arrived at the War Department the staff had finished work on the reorganization plans, and the Secretary of War had forwarded General March's bill to Congress. Palmer stated he was appalled with the plan:

It frankly discarded our traditional citizen army as an element in our national defense. Hereafter military leadership was to be a monopoly of the professional soldier. At the close of a war against German militarism we were to have a militaristic system in the United States.<sup>61</sup>

Palmer took up his duties as Chief of the War Plans Branch of the General Staff (General March regarded Palmer as a very able officer).<sup>62</sup> He made several attempts to secure reconsideration of the March plan. He argued that the country would not stand for a big standing army; therefore, the War Department should withdraw the plan and advocate the traditional "army of the People" in time of peace.<sup>63</sup> He saw his opportunity to reopen the question of reorganization when he was required to comment on a bill written by Senator Harry S. New which offered an approach to military policy which differed from the March program. Palmer wrote a study entitled "Outline of a Plan for National Military Organization Based on

Universal Military Training" which served later as a basis for his testimony before the Senate Military Affairs Committee. In his plan, Palmer proposed a universal military obligation consisting of a period of no more than 11 months continuous training in the 19th year followed by 4 years in the organized reserve--the plan General March found so objectionable. Palmer's plan advocated a territorial scheme of 16 corps areas and a Regular Army consisting of an expeditious force ready for immediate action with the troops necessary to man foreign garrisons and operate the training and reserve system.<sup>64</sup> He gained a number of supporters for his plan among the officers serving on the General Staff who were as impressed as Palmer had been with the performance of American citizen soldiers in France. However, Palmer was told "that any deviation from the half-million standing army plan was not open to further discussion."<sup>65</sup>

The Senate hearings continued and General March was having rough going. The Committee continued to attack costs and the War Department's attitude toward the National Guard. The Guard had strong support in Congress and as the testimony unfolds, Guard supporters can be seen shying away from any plan which might increase the influence of the Regular Army. Also the Senators were receiving pressure from their constituents against universal military training. The Grange,<sup>66</sup> one of the most powerful organizations in the country, was most vocal against "any effort to develop in America a caste of authority which has its sole excuse in a shoulder strap; and any tendency in thought which would substitute armed force for moral

ideals."<sup>67</sup> As one writer puts it, the Grange favored "the preparedness of right, rather than the preparedness of might."<sup>68</sup>

The Committee hearings were bogging down. Testimony by Major General Leonard Wood and Major General John F. O'Ryan added to the doubts of the Senators concerning the War Department Bill. General Wood reiterated his position supporting a citizen army and stated that he could see no reason, unless the Army had assumed new missions he was not aware of, for having an army in excess of 225,000 or at most 250,000 men. He made a plea for universal military training and agreed that once adopted the Regular Army could be reduced below 225,000.<sup>69</sup>

General O'Ryan, who had commanded the only National Guard Division in France and later had returned to his law practice in New York, made a strong case for the National Guard. He believed in one federal army composed primarily of citizen soldiers with obligatory 3-month training and supplementary service. He offered the opinion that the Regular Army was obsolete but he would retain about 120,000 professionals who would share policymaking with the citizen soldiery.<sup>70</sup>

In later years, Senator Wadsworth remembered General O'Ryan's testimony as being helpful but that "nearly all the others appeared to hesitate, and to be frank, we were not getting on very well."<sup>71</sup> Senator Wadsworth recalled also that a number of younger officers of the regular establishment had urged him to hear a lieutenant colonel by the name of Palmer who had the confidence of General Pershing and knew a great deal about military policy and had been studying it for



years. He remembered that when Colonel Palmer was called by his committee "he drew a bigger crowd [to the hearings] than most Major Generals"<sup>72</sup> and that with Palmer's testimony the Committee was finally hearing a proposal it liked.

Although Palmer had not met Senator Wadsworth before he appeared before the Senator's committee, he had heard him speak at a meeting of the Military Training Camps Association.<sup>73</sup> Palmer was most impressed by the Senator who told of the work of his committee and its determination to erect a sound and permanent military system. Palmer remembered especially the advice the Senator gave the audience concerning testifying before his committee. Palmer recalled Senator Wadsworth cautioning that if called as witnesses "you should remember that the American people through their Congress, have a right to your frank and honest personal opinions, without reference to the opinions of any other persons."<sup>74</sup> Palmer then resolved that if he was called it would be his duty "to submit an army organization based upon my conception of our traditional military policy."<sup>75</sup>

Palmer walked into the committee room on 7 October 1919 with a stack of papers including the study he had made when asked to analyze the New Bill. Senator Wadsworth recalled "the War Department Bill had already received some pretty hard knocks . . . but Palmer simply demolished it. It took some nerve on his part to do that, because he was serving in a subordinate capacity in the War Department at the time."<sup>76</sup>

Colonel Palmer started his testimony with a lucid discussion of what form of peacetime institutions should be developed to provide

preparedness in war. He stated his belief "that complete preparedness implies capacity to develop all or any necessary part of the manpower of the nation to meet any given emergency and that this can be assured only through universal military training."<sup>77</sup> He then discussed the merits of a standing army versus a citizen army. He argued that the professional army in time of war used the citizen soldiers in the lower enlisted and commissioned ranks and that under this system "leadership in war and conduct of preparation in peace are concentrated very largely in a professional class in the same way it is concentrated in a professional class in the armies of Germany and France."<sup>78</sup> He argued further that with military leadership and control in the professional military establishment that establishment had to be large in peacetime and that, furthermore, there was no provision to develop the leadership and genius of the people as a whole.<sup>79</sup> He summarized the standing army system under the term "militarism." "For militarism is a characteristic of a particular type of military establishment and is not necessarily inherent in all forms of preparedness."<sup>80</sup>

Palmer proceeded to describe the citizen army as an institution "formed and organized in peace with full opportunity for competent citizen soldiers to rise by successive steps to any rank for which they definitely qualify. . . ."<sup>81</sup> He listed seven advantages of a citizen army to include: that the war army would be identical with the peace army as the bulk of the officers and noncommissioned officers would be assigned in their proper places in the citizen army; that with an identical wartime/peacetime army all mobilization plans would be directed toward the employment of a specific force always organized

at war strength and prepared to function; that an organized citizen army would require the minimum number of soldiers on active duty in time of peace thereby reducing costs; and that a citizen army in peacetime was following a rational tradition.<sup>82</sup> It is significant to note that the advantages he cited hinged on his assumption that there would be compulsory universal military training.

Palmer then impressed the Committee by offering an organizational plan that would provide for the defensive purposes of the United States instead of the aggressive purposes usually associated with the professional army. He modeled his organization on the Swiss Army which maintained a military force of trained civilians which had served so successfully as a deterrent against aggression.<sup>83</sup> He recommended that the National Guard be the organized citizen army that would receive the men trained under universal military training, a view which coincided with the views of National Guard advocates on the Committee.<sup>84</sup>

As his testimony went on, Palmer continued to offer arguments that were undoubtedly irresistible to the Committee members. One illustration he used must have been particularly appealing to those Senators like Senator Wadsworth who were sincerely seeking to find a logical way to structure the peacetime army. Palmer presented a diagram with a small rectangular area representing the permanent establishment and a large, vague, uncertain figure representing the citizen army with "no determination as to how it is to be organized, or anything about it."<sup>85</sup> He noted "that is the way it has been in the past, and for that reason our war plans have been more or less

mere ropes of sand, because we did not know what we were going to carry them out with."<sup>86</sup> He then argued that if the vague shapeless figure was replaced by an organized citizen army,

The size of that force becomes absolutely precise. Instead of measuring from the regular establishment to the citizen army, it ought to be figured the other way. Determine what the citizen army is going to be and then figure back to the necessary regular component to generate it.<sup>87</sup>

This argument must have had appeal; he won the Committee.<sup>88</sup>

During his testimony, he was questioned extensively about staffing procedures within the War Department. Palmer's response to the question raised by Senator Wadsworth, "What do you think the proper function of the Chief of Staff is under an ideal system in the country?"<sup>89</sup> gives insight into his reaction to not having his plans approved by General March and into his philosophy of staff versus command responsibility:

When it is a question of bring a policy to you [Congress] prepared by an agency which you have created in order to form that policy it looks to me like the Chief of Staff is essentially in the position of a presiding officer. For example, if I am in command of a regiment of infantry, so long as I act according to regulations and orders of higher authority, the policy of that regiment is my policy, and that is proper and right; but if I am the senior officer of a deliberative scientific body instructed to prepare a recommendation for higher authority, I am not the commanding officer in that sense. In other words, you cannot apply the principle of command to both processes. In that event - and I will take my own branch of the General Staff, dealing with national defense plans, if a project is brought to me that I do not agree with, I call the members of the branch together and talk it over with them. Frequently that will result in a correction or amendment. Perhaps there will

continue to be a difference of opinion between me and the officers who prepared the plan. In that event I do not believe that I have any right to order them to accept my view. I do not believe I have any right to forward my own opinion and suppress theirs, but I do have the right and duty to forward their view with such adverse comments as I choose to make. I do not think you can arrive at a scientific determination of policy in any other way.<sup>90</sup>

When Palmer left the committee room on 8 August 1919, a messenger overtook him and informed him that Senator Wadsworth wanted to see him. The Senator then advised Palmer that he was requesting his assignment as the Committee's military advisor in connection with the drafting of a National Defense Act.<sup>91</sup> Palmer recalled that in authorizing his assignment to duty with the Committee, Secretary of War Baker wrote that it was to be understood that Palmer did not represent the War Department. Palmer stated, "This left me absolutely independent. My subsequent advice to the members of the committee was therefore based solely upon my own professional opinion."<sup>92</sup>

JOHN J. PERSHING: SUPPORT  
FOR A CITIZEN ARMY

While Palmer had demolished General March's plan, General Pershing buried it. Pershing knew he was going to go before the Senate Committee to testify and had his staff prepare for him a summary study of the various bills and such hearings as were available. The study included a recommendation for universal military training with 7 months training and retention of promotion by seniority.<sup>93</sup> Before his appearance, General Pershing was briefed by General March who cautioned that public opinion was turning against universal military

training and that "we have a better chance if we ask for three months than if we ask for nine months [training]. What we want is the principle accepted."<sup>94</sup>

When Pershing started his 3 days of testimony before an admiring session of the joint Senate-House Committees, he established his opposition to March's plan. He started out by stating, "It is to be remembered that our traditions are opposed to the maintenance of a large standing army. Our wars have practically all been fought by citizen soldiery."<sup>95</sup> However, Pershing proposed a professional army of about 300,000 officers and men--not a small army for the times--supplemented by a federalized National Guard, and a universal military training program in which, after 6 months training, the citizens would serve in organized reserve units. He defended promotion by seniority and did nothing to defend the General Staff against the Committee's readiness to criticize it for all the Army's problems.<sup>96</sup>

Later, General March wrote at length on Pershing's failure to defend the General Staff and his inability to appreciate the problems of supplying the AEF with men and materiel. He attributed this lack of appreciation to Pershing's advance from captain to brigadier general without performing duty in the intermediary ranks to include obtaining proficiency in General Staff work.<sup>97</sup> It is evident from their writings and testimony that a bitter feud existed between these two generals with military historians taking one side or the other. From his testimony, it does appear that General Pershing did not appreciate the support he had received through the work of the General Staff. Whether his feud with General March had anything to do with

his repudiation of March's reorganization bill is not apparent, but there is evidence that Pershing recognized the political climate and, realistically, tried to get as good a military policy for the Army as possible within the existing mood of the people.

#### SENATE MILITARY COMMITTEE: A COMPROMISE PLAN

As advisor to the Senate Military Affairs Committee, John McAuley Palmer worked for 10 months with the Committee in framing a new reorganization bill. Believing himself freed from War Department guidance, Palmer framed a bill similar to that proposed during his testimony. (A greater insight into Palmer's philosophy of the necessity for a citizen army modeled on the Swiss system and his recommendations for a Department of National Defense can be found in his book Statesmanship or War.)

There was much discussion in Army circles about the reorganization bill Palmer was developing. The 6 March 1920, Army and Navy Journal gives some indication of the form the discussions were taking. In response to a question, "Will not the provisions of this bill tend to minimize the importance of the Regular officers and men?" a "high ranking officer who is conceded to be one of the foremost military experts in the Army" replied that,

Such a view will find little support after a careful study . . . in all of our great wars we have used a large citizen army and have always considered that the Regular Army with its trained professional personnel was the necessary nucleus for the large war force.<sup>98</sup>

The "high ranking officer" who sounds very much like John McAuley Palmer ended his discussion on the merits of a citizen army with the contention that:

I am certain I have the support of my brother officers of long service, that in the Wadsworth bill we have the means of attaining a constructive national military policy that will embody the best military opinion of the nation in practical form.<sup>99</sup>

It would be interesting to know what General March thought about being relegated to less than the best in military opinion. Although in his book he defended his plan, he never rebutted Colonel Palmer directly or criticized Palmer for his part in defeating his reorganization bill.

While Palmer's work continued, the House Committee determined that universal military training was impolitic and dropped it from their bill. The Senate did carry universal military training into debate but the Committee members, recognizing the political implications, dropped it from the Senate measure also. Senator Wadsworth wrote later, "The prominent Senatorial leaders of both political parties kept insisting that, 1920 being a Presidential election year, it would be political folly to permit such an issue to enter the campaign."<sup>100</sup>

Universal military training got a thorough going over in the spring 1920 issues of the Army and Navy Journal. There were attacks against excessive costs, the length of the training period, and the uselessness of arguments for this training based on the lessons of history:



The American people have been resisting the lessons of American history for 140 years. . . . The defeat of the universal military training legislation at the present session of Congress is unquestionably due to feeling against it by the greater part of the people of the country. . . ."101

With universal military training removed, the bills passed both Houses. Removal of universal military training emasculated Palmer's citizen army program. However, Palmer rallied and argued that volunteering could produce adequate numbers for his system. Russell Weigley contends that Palmer constructed a plausible argument for his Swiss system when he stated:

Switzerland in order to fit the mood of the twenties needed universal military training because from a population of less than 4,000,000 she had to mobilize 300,000 soldiers in three or four days. But the defense of the United States would be assured if 500,000 effective soldiers could be mobilized from a population of 115,000,000 and for that purpose volunteering would suffice.<sup>102</sup>

This argument is not too convincing. The United States would have broader tasks and volunteering had proven in the past to fall far short of the Nation's combat needs in time of war. Undoubtedly Palmer was aware of this, but he grasped at an argument that would still support a portion of his proposals.<sup>103</sup>

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE ACT OF 1920: ARMY OF A DREAM

The National Defense Act of 4 June 1920 emerged in the form of a series of amendments to the National Defense Act of 1916. Specifically, it provided that the Army of the United States would consist of the Regular Army with a force of 288,000, the National Guard while

in the service of the United States, and the Organized Reserve to include the Officers and Enlisted Reserve Corps. The old geographical departments were abandoned and a tactical as well as an administrative organization was created by dividing the country into nine corps areas serving three armies. Each corps area was to contain one Regular Army division, two or three National Guard divisions, and three Organized Reserve divisions.<sup>104</sup> "Initially, there seemed to be no problem either as to officers or equipment. Reserve commissions were freely offered to the great host of temporary officers leaving service, while surplus war stocks provided an enormous store of weapons and ammunition."<sup>105</sup> The ROTC courses would continue to replenish the supply of reserve officers, but there were no provisions made for replenishing war stocks.

The Act continued wartime branches established under General March such as the Chemical Warfare Service, which March wanted abolished, the Finance Service and the Air Service. The movement to make the latter a separate military department met with defeat but only after a bitter battle. Supply and materiel were turned over to the Assistant Secretary of War as opposed to March's recommendation for a Transportation Service--a victory for the bureau chiefs who could bypass the Chief of Staff where procurement was concerned. A single promotion list was adopted which provided for promotion by merit--a victory for General March--and the General Staff survived. The General Staff was authorized a Chief of Staff, four assistants, and 88 professional and nonprofessional officers.<sup>106</sup>

The latter mix was proposed by Palmer to insure adequate "citizen soldier" representation for civilian component matters.<sup>107</sup>

What the Bill failed to provide for was an adequate enlisted force. Almost all of the men who had fought in World War I were drafted for the duration and owed no further duty. The only source available for replacements were the few volunteers for the National Guard and Regular Army soldiers entering the Enlisted Reserve upon separation. "During the '20's the United States was to boast an organized reserve of some 100,000 officers . . . and a handful of enlisted men--a military force of at least doubtful utility."<sup>108</sup>

Unfortunately for Palmer, Senator Wadsworth, other advocates of the citizen army, and the Nation, the National Defense Act of 1920 became an "army of a dream, impossible to fill with reality."<sup>109</sup> By 1922, Congress reduced the authorized strength of the Regular Army from 280,000 to 125,000 and more than a thousand "surplus" Regular officers were discharged.<sup>110</sup> "From 1922 through 1926, 137,000 men were provided for and from 1927 to 1935, 118,750 were authorized. It is ironic to note, as General March points out, that an army of 100,000 had been imposed upon Germany in order to render her impotent."<sup>111</sup>

Congress gave the President the authority to reorganize the Army to fit the force cuts. Palmer urged that some of the regular divisions be demobilized. Despite the fact that General Pershing was now Chief of Staff and Palmer his Aide, the War Department retained all existing regular divisions--with attendant officer and non-commissioned officer positions--at greatly reduced strength with manpower obtained by closing corps area training centers designed to

train the National Guard and Reserves. Thus, Uptonian skeleton Regular Army units were maintained and the "Regular Army concentrated on its own problems and neglected the instruction of the National Guard and Organized Reserve and the former sank back toward its unready condition of years past while the latter virtually disappeared."<sup>112</sup>

#### SOME OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE MARCH-PALMER CONTROVERSY

Basically, the controversy between General March and Colonel Palmer rested on a fundamental difference of opinion on policy. March believed that the most effective security was a standing army prepared to expand to about double its strength in an emergency. His bill provided for the training of civilians but it released them on the conclusion of their training and imposed no military obligation in time of peace. All that it did was to provide a brief period of training for the young men of the Nation who would be conscripted in the event of war. On the other hand, Palmer subscribed to a citizen army concept which deemphasized the Regular Army and placed reliance for mobilization upon the National Guard and a reserve force consisting primarily of young men made available through universal military training.

The difference between the two plans resulted in differing roles for the Regular Army. Under March's plan, with no organized citizen army in existence and capable of rapid mobilization, it was necessary to maintain a larger Regular Army in readiness for an emergency--thus

the proposal to keep the structure for a standing army of 500,000. Conversely, Palmer and other advocates of a citizen army felt that if their plan was adopted a much smaller Regular Army would be adequate.

General March did not grasp the depth and intensity of the revulsion against war in any form prevalent at the end of World War I. Some citizens were pinning their hopes for peace upon the League of Nations while others were fleeing to isolation. A large and expensive combat-ready military structure was the last thing either group would support. Colonel Palmer did recognize this revulsion against a large standing army, and he recognized also the political significance of the Nation's historic reliance on the militia in time of war. But like General March, he did not recognize that the climate of the Nation would reject any thought of compulsory universal military training. Therefore, Palmer, with universal military training removed from his plan, was reduced to pleading the cause of a citizen army against an Uptonian army with the hope that adoption of a citizen army would open the door to acceptance of universal military training some time in the future.

General March, while recognizing the advantages of universal military training, did not depend upon acceptance of this training to provide for the future structure of the Army. He recognized that conscription would be required in time of war and developed a structure where the draftees would be absorbed into Regular Army units under the supervision of professional soldiers. It does not appear that General March believed militia men made poor soldiers.

Instead, it is evident from his writings that he felt the National Guard and Reserves were not responsive enough to mobilization requirements. He placed his reliance on forces he knew would be responsive immediately and had the training and expertise to lead inexperienced troops into battle.<sup>113</sup>

When viewed from the vantage point of 1973, it is amazing to discover that a policy for the future structure of the Army could be debated before Congress by the Chief of Staff on one side and one of his staff officers on the other, with the latter's opinion being accepted. However, in 1919 the Regular Army was still small and the opinions and personalities of lieutenant colonels and colonels were not buried as deeply in bureaucratic layering as they are today. Also, there were strong factions within the Officer Corps actively working to undermine General March. Colonel Palmer was part of the faction revolving around General Pershing, and it appears that his association with Pershing helped carry him to the Senate Armed Forces Committee Hearings where he repudiated the March Reorganization Plan.

This is not to imply that Palmer deliberately set out to discredit March's plan. He was carried forward by convictions he had formed as a young lieutenant awakened to political reality by his politician grandfather who was, incidentally, a successful citizen soldier. Later, as a captain, his views on military policy were endorsed by Secretary of War Stimson. Then General Pershing sent him to Washington without instructions to represent the AEF knowing both March's and Palmer's views on reorganization. Thus, Palmer came

to the General Staff in 1919 armed with the support of two powerful men and ran headlong into another powerful figure with convictions concerning the future of the Army as strong as his.

Actually, General March and Colonel Palmer had more in common than would appear from their different opinions on military policy. Each was a Military Academy graduate, graduating 3 years apart; each had learned his profession in a small, isolated, inward oriented Army where promotions were slow and duty frequently monotonous. They both believed strongly in the ideals they were serving that made them respond to larger situations and give outstanding service. They both possessed the virtues of men of honor and each was equally arrogant in believing his position was right.

The origins of Palmer's struggle for a citizen army lay in his relationship with his grandfather who awakened him to political reality. General March did not have this early exposure to political reality, and when he had the opportunity to learn, closed his mind and door to this reality and proudly commented later that while Chief of Staff he had completely divorced his decisions from politics.<sup>114</sup> March believed, as did Emory Upton, in the superiority of the professional officer seasoned by varied assignments through the ranks. Also, he had seen the bankruptcy of the volunteer system in 1916 when the National Guard could not respond to mobilization requirements and conscription became necessary. It appears that these two factors alone made it inevitable that his post World War I Army would depend upon the Regular Army for readiness.

The evidence shows that Palmer followed the proper course in attempting to have his views heard by General March. But when he was overruled, he was able to rationalize that the Chief of Staff is a presiding officer over a scientific study group without authority to suppress differences of opinions. Conversely, General March believed that after considering the opinions of his staff he had the right and responsibility for final decision, subject to the approval of the Secretary of War, and could speak for the entire Army. He had legal basis for this assumption. In 1919 General March obtained approval from the Secretary of War to publish General Order 80 which reads in part:

The Chief of Staff by law . . . takes rank and precedence over all officers of the Army, and by virtue of that position and by authority of and in the name of the Secretary of War he issues such orders as will insure that the policies of the War Department are harmoniously executed. . . .115

When John McAuley Palmer testified before a Senate Committee whose members were aware that he was Pershing's protege and, more importantly, who distrusted a military policy which placed its main dependence upon a large standing army, he had an audience sympathetic to his cause. This friendly atmosphere coupled with his logical, lucid arguments led to his selection as military advisor for the purpose of drafting a committee reorganization bill that placed reliance for mobilization upon the National Guard and Reserve. With Palmer's assignment to the Committee, the factions opposing General March had won a major victory.



When General March, probably out of arrogance of pride, allowed Palmer to act independently without strings back to the War Department, he made a crucial error. In the absence of dialogue, it was impossible to partially resolve differences and present a united front to a Congress that delights in dividing and conquering. On the other hand, by completely discrediting General March's plan--which did have some good features that could be praised--Colonel Palmer allowed his personal involvement with policy to interfere with his loyalty to his chief and his duty as a staff officer.



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#### FOOTNOTES

1. Russell F. Weigley, Toward an American Army (New York and London, 1962), p. 7.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
3. Walter Millis, Arms and Men: A Study in American Military History (New York, 1956), pp. 238-239.
4. Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State (New York, 1957), p. 233.
5. Stephen E. Ambrose, Upton and the Army (Baton Rouge, 1964), p. 110.
6. Russell F. Weigley, ed., The American Military: Readings in the History of Military in American Society (Reading, 1969), p. xvi.
7. Russell F. Weigley, History of the United States Army (New York, 1967), p. 276.
8. Ambrose, p. 102.
9. Ibid., p. 101.
10. Ibid., p. 102.
11. Ibid., pp. 102-105.
12. Ibid., p. 105.
13. Emory Upton, The Armies of Asia and Europe (New York, 1878).
14. Ambrose, p. 116.
15. Emory Upton, The Military Policy of the United States (Washington, 1904).
16. Elihu Root was a well-known lawyer appointed by President McKinley as Secretary of War. When he took office, the Army was headed by a Commanding General who reported to the President and bureau chiefs who acted independently. Root had the office of Commanding General dropped altogether and substituted a Chief of the General Staff reportable to him who would head a general staff that would undertake the war planning function and assure the availability of materiel. Basically, the Chief of Staff would depend upon the General Staff to investigate and report upon all functions affecting the efficiency of the Army and to plan for national defense.

17. Ambrose, p. 156.
18. Weigley, History of the United States Army, p. 568.
19. Millis, p. 198.
20. Ibid., p. 199.
21. Ibid., p. 200.
22. Weigley, The American Military, p. 41.
23. Weigley, Towards an American Army, p. 214.
24. Ibid., p. 215.
25. Ibid., p. 217.
26. "General Palmer Dies, Fought for UMT," New York Times, 26 October 1955.
27. The General Staff Palmer joined was small--less than 100 officers--and consisted of four divisions: Coast Artillery Division, War College Division, Division of Militia Affairs, and the Mobile Army Division. The War College Division in partnership with the War College was the overall policy agency for war.
28. Weigley, History of the United States Army, p. 339.
29. Ibid., p. 340.
30. Ibid.
31. John McAuley Palmer, America in Arms (Washington, DC, 1943), p. 135.
32. Ibid., pp. 135-136.
33. Ibid., p. 136.
34. C. Joseph Bernardo and Eugene H. Bacon, American Military Policy (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1955), p. 340.
35. Ibid., p. 341.
36. Ibid., p. 342.
37. Ibid., p. 344.
38. Edward M. Coffman, The Hilt of the Sword: The Career of Peyton C. March (Madison, Milwaukee, and London, 1966), pp. 4-6.

39. Ibid., pp. 249-250.
40. Ibid., p. 151.
41. Peyton C. March, The Nation at War (Garden City, 1932), p. 330.
42. Ibid., p. 352.
43. John McAuley Palmer, Statesmanship or War (New York, 1927), pp. x-xi.
44. Coffman, p. 175.
45. March, p. 331.
46. Ibid., p. 332.
47. Millis, p. 241.
48. March, p. 238.
49. When March first took office, there was a direct line of command from the President to the field commanders which, in effect, meant two officers of equal rank subject to the same authority. March had this changed in March of 1919 when General Order 80 placed the Chief of Staff over all officers of the Army.
50. Coffman, p. 179.
51. US Congress, Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Military Affairs, Reorganization of the Army, p. 45. (Hereafter referred to as, Congress, Reorganization of the Army.)
52. Ibid., p. 43.
53. Ibid., p. 3.
54. Ibid., Vol. 2, Index, p. (1).
55. Ibid., Vol. 1 and Vol. 2.
56. Ibid., p. 56.
57. March, pp. 352-353.
58. Congress, Reorganization of the Army, p. 60.
59. March, p. 341.
60. Palmer, America in Arms, p. 60.

61. Ibid., p. 166.
62. Coffman, p. 179.
63. Palmer, America in Arms, p. 166.
64. Coffman, p. 180.
65. Palmer, America in Arms, p. 166.

66. An American agrarian movement taking its name from the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry, an organization founded in 1867. Though established for educational and social purposes, local granges became political forums and served as channels of farmer protest against what they considered political evils.

67. Bernardo and Bacon, p. 384.
68. Ibid.
69. Congress, Reorganization of the Army, p. 620.
70. Ibid., pp. 523-524.
71. Palmer, Statesmanship or War, p. iii.
72. Ibid.

73. While Chief of Staff, Leonard Wood organized summer camps at which college students could receive military training if they paid their own way. In 1915, as part of the preparedness movement, he opened a similar camp at Plattsburg, New York, paid for by private contributions, for business and professional men. The preparedness movement assured there would be volunteers. These influential citizens not only received military training but renewed their enthusiasm for preparedness. The idea spread quickly, other camps were created and graduates formed the Military Training Camp Association.

74. Palmer, America in Arms, p. 168.
75. Ibid.
76. Palmer, Statesmanship or War, p. xiv.
77. Congress, Reorganization of the Army, p. 1175.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., p. 1176.
80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.
82. Ibid., pp. 1177-1178.
83. Palmer, Statesmanship or War, pp. 153-154.
84. Congress, Reorganization of the Army, p. 1184.
85. Ibid., p. 1191.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., p. 1192.
88. Palmer, Statesmanship or War, p. xv.
89. Congress, Reorganization of the Army, p. 1223.
90. Ibid., p. 1223-1224.
91. Palmer, America in Arms, p. 169.
92. Ibid., p. 170.
93. American Expeditionary Forces Study, Questions and Answers Re Commander-in-Chief Appearing Before the Military Committee of the Congress with Reference to Questions of Army Reorganization, 3 October 1919, pp. 2, 21.
94. Coffman, p. 201.
95. Congress, Reorganization of the Army, p. 1572.
96. Coffman, pp. 202-203.
97. March, pp. 267-268.
98. "General Staff Plan in Senate Army Bill," Army and Navy Journal, 6 March 1920, p. 827.
99. Ibid.
100. Coffman, p. 208.
101. "How to Aid Universal Military Training," Army and Navy Journal, 24 April 1920, p. 1029.
102. Weigley, Towards an American Army, p. 234.
103. Congress, Reorganization of the Army, p. 1175.

- 104. Bernardo and Bacon, p. 385.
- 105. Millis, p. 242.
- 106. Bernardo and Bacon, p. 185.
- 107. Palmer, America in Arms, p. 185.
- 108. Millis, p. 242.
- 109. Ibid., p. 243.
- 110. Weigley, History of the United States Army, p. 491.
- 111. Bernardo and Bacon, p. 387.
- 112. Weigley, Towards an American Army, p. 241.
- 113. March, p. 54.
- 114. Ibid., p. 56.
- 115. Ibid., p. 50.

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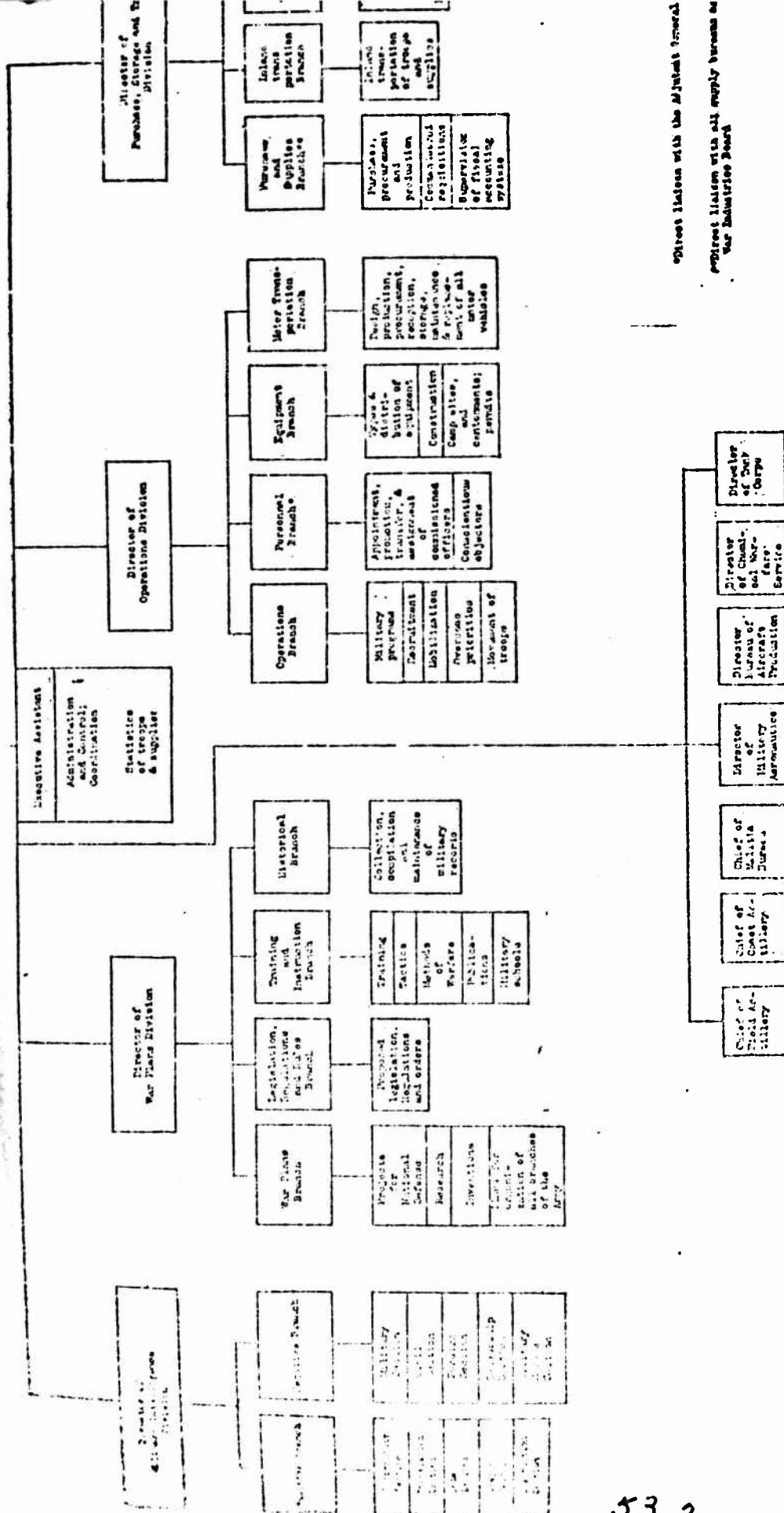
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